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ABSTRACT

This is an evaluation report on the vocational education program in the majority black school system of Oakland, California. An overview of the employment problems in Oakland and a description of the report's preparation are contained in an introduction. Chapter two examines the relationship of the vocational education program to planning, curriculum design and evaluation activities in the general school system. In the third chapter, the transition from classroom to workplace is reviewed, focusing on work experience programs, cooperative education programs, job placement efforts, and two transition programs undertaken in Oakland. The fourth chapter presents the employers' perspective on the vocational education program and the prospective labor market. Chapter five discusses federal funding through the Vocational Education Act. Funding for programs designed to meet the needs of disadvantaged students, handicapped students, and consumer and homemaking education is covered in this chapter. The sixth chapter outlines sex equity issues in the vocational education program and presents vocational enrollment figures by sex. In the final chapter, recommendations for improving the vocational education program are directed to the Oakland school system, employers in the greater Oakland area, and parents and community leaders. (APM)

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A Report to the Citizens of Oakland Calif.

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Vocational Education: Cause or Cure for Youth Unemployment?

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
Division of Legal Information
and
Community Service

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FOREWORD

The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., has for four decades fought for equal opportunity in education and employment as a means of securing and advancing the rights and economic security of black Americans. We have litigated many hundreds of cases to overturn racial barriers to better jobs and schooling and pressed for stronger enforcement of federal laws and programs designed to help blacks become equal and productive members of the society.

In the past 2 decades, vocational education in America's schools has grown to a 6 billion dollar enterprise enrolling some 17 million students while the unemployment rate of black youth has remained 3 times the rate for white youth. Our goal of enhancing educational and employment opportunities for blacks led to the creation of Project Alert, a national program designed to make vocational education more responsive to the job training needs of black men and women.

The following is a report about the condition of vocational education in one urban, majority black school system — Oakland, California. It illuminates a central and all too common dilemma. Vocational education can be both a cause of and a cure for black youth unemployment. Vocational education causes youth unemployment when it trains students for jobs that do not exist and when it inadequately prepares them for those that do exist. However, we believe that vocational education can help to reduce youth unemployment if it is closely related to the current and emerging manpower needs of the economy and if it prepares students to secure both entry-level employment and advancement within an occupation.

As jobs are becoming more technical and competition for them, even among college graduates, more acute, blacks in every community are looking to vocational-technical training as well as academic education as a means to secure full and equal participation in the economy. The vocational education system in Oakland, in the State of California and in the Nation must respond to this challenge.

J. LeVonne Chambers
President
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

April, 1981

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Photo by Joffrè Clarke

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1 Introduction

Youth unemployment is a serious national problem that has reached staggering proportions, especially for minorities in our cities. We have reason to be alarmed about the long-range implications and the social and economic costs for America tomorrow of our failure to provide meaningful opportunities for this generation of young people to begin a productive life today.

Californians are concerned. The State spends more than 2 billion dollars annually on vocational education and youth training programs. But youth unemployment has not abated. Recognizing the need to address this urgent problem in the State, the Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 576, creating a Task Group to explore how resources could more effectively be utilized to combat youth unemployment.

In a letter accompanying the report of the AB 576 Task Group to the Legislature in December 1980, Governor Edmund Brown remarked:

> *As we continue to shift to an information-based economy in the 1980's, it is crucial that our vocational education programs also change with the times.*

Vocational training has long been offered in America's high schools. The secondary school curriculum reflects a hierarchy of values, with vocational education assumed to equip students for jobs and academic courses designed for college entrance. These two curricula have frequently sorted students into two distinct classes: academic courses for the more affluent and brightest, and vocational classes for the poor and less talented. This dichotomy does not meet the reality of the 1980's. Many students plan to pursue higher education at some point in their lives but want to leave high school with some introduction to a skill that will allow them to earn a living. Most entry-level jobs require basic skills in reading and computation. Higher status, higher-paying jobs demand a solid academic background in mathematics and English.

One-third of America's black families are headed by women and 60% of these families are poor. Those concerned about the viability of black families must assure the availability of education and training that will prepare young black women to be self-sufficient.

This report concerns the relation between high school vocational training and youth unemployment in Oakland. The city has the highest unemployment in the Bay Area. Youths 16 to 21 years old are the largest group among the unemployed. Blacks in this age category have three times the unemployment of whites. A higher proportion of blacks than whites drops out of school and does not graduate. Each year in Oakland, 1,000 students terminate their formal education at high school graduation.

Although businesses and industries have moved out of Oakland to the suburbs in the last 10 years, the work force has expanded. However, the job market has changed. Skilled and experienced workers are in demand. Those with few or no skills face acute competition for the declining number of jobs that require no training or experience.

Whether the school system is adequately preparing young men and women for their adult working years is an issue of enormous concern to Oakland's citizens—to students facing an uncertain future and to their parents, to employers looking for an educated and disciplined work force, to community leaders and elected officials trying to cope with the city's problems on declining revenue, and to taxpayers revolting against increased public expenditures.

In this report the relationship between vocational education and youth unemployment is examined from several aspects. We interviewed officials in the headquarters of the Oakland Public Schools, teachers and principals, former students, employers and a State official. From the educators, we wanted to learn about the goals of vocational education, how it fits into the high school curriculum, and what specific courses are offered.

In the belief that work during school years significantly increases the probability of employment in the immediate post-school years, we wanted to know what work opportunity programs, especially for vocational students, are sponsored by or operated in conjunction with the Oakland Public Schools. We asked former students how they rated their various training experiences. What role does the school district play in helping students make the transition from the classroom to the workplace?

If vocational education is to succeed for students, it must be closely related to what the labor market needs. It is therefore important to view vocational education from the employers' perspective. We interviewed 19 Oakland companies and business establishments, some of which cooperate with the school system in the Adopt-a-School Program and various youth employment projects.

Over 80% of Oakland's funds for vocational education come from state revenue. The balance of the vocational education budget comes from the federal government through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976. That Act seeks to equalize vocational education opportunities for certain high-need students by concentrating resources in needy school districts such as Oakland. The legislation also requires recipients of these funds to overcome sex bias and stereotyping in vocational education which restricts the ability of young women to enter the higher-paying, male-dominated occupations. This report examines how Oakland has used its federal vocational education funds and what progress has been made toward sex equity in vocational education.

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One third of America's black families are headed by women. How will this teenage girl get the skills necessary to support the child she is carrying?

Photo by Kathy Sloane ➤

The central and inescapable conclusion of our research is that vocational education in Oakland's high schools does not contribute to solving the community's problem of youth unemployment. This conclusion should not be interpreted to mean that no training matters, that no individual students have benefited from it, or that there are no good quality programs. But there is strong evidence that the current vocational education curriculum is not related to labor force participation after high school. The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. offers its findings to the citizens of Oakland, public officials and private citizens alike, in the hope that they will mobilize all concerned with youth unemployment to take a fresh, new look at the role the public schools can and should play in preparing young people for the world of work in their adult life.

• • • •

No report of this kind could have been done without the full cooperation of Oakland school officials. It is to their credit that they were willing to open themselves and their files to a searching, outside examination by a private, civil rights organization. It is clear to us that there are people inside the school system who recognize that the vocational eduation program is not what it ought to be and that changes should be made. This report's findings will come as no particular surprise to them. Perhaps it will bolster their efforts to achieve change.

Former Superintendent Ruth Love welcomed our investigation and secured the cooperation of her staff. William Fortman and his entire staff in the Office of Career, Vocational and Regional Occupational Centers Education gave unstintingly of their time and fulfilled all of our requests for documentary information. Principals and teachers interrupted their busy schedules to talk to us.

The information obtained from our interviews of personnel officials and department managers of business establishments and companies in Oakland has provided exceedingly helpful insights for this report.

School visits were conducted by the staff of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund and James Morales of the National Youth Law Project in San Francisco. Telephone interviews with employers were done by Annette Lareau, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Information for this report was gathered by Allen Black, Western Regional Director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. The project was conducted and the report written by Phyllis McClure, Director of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's Project Alert in Washington, D.C.

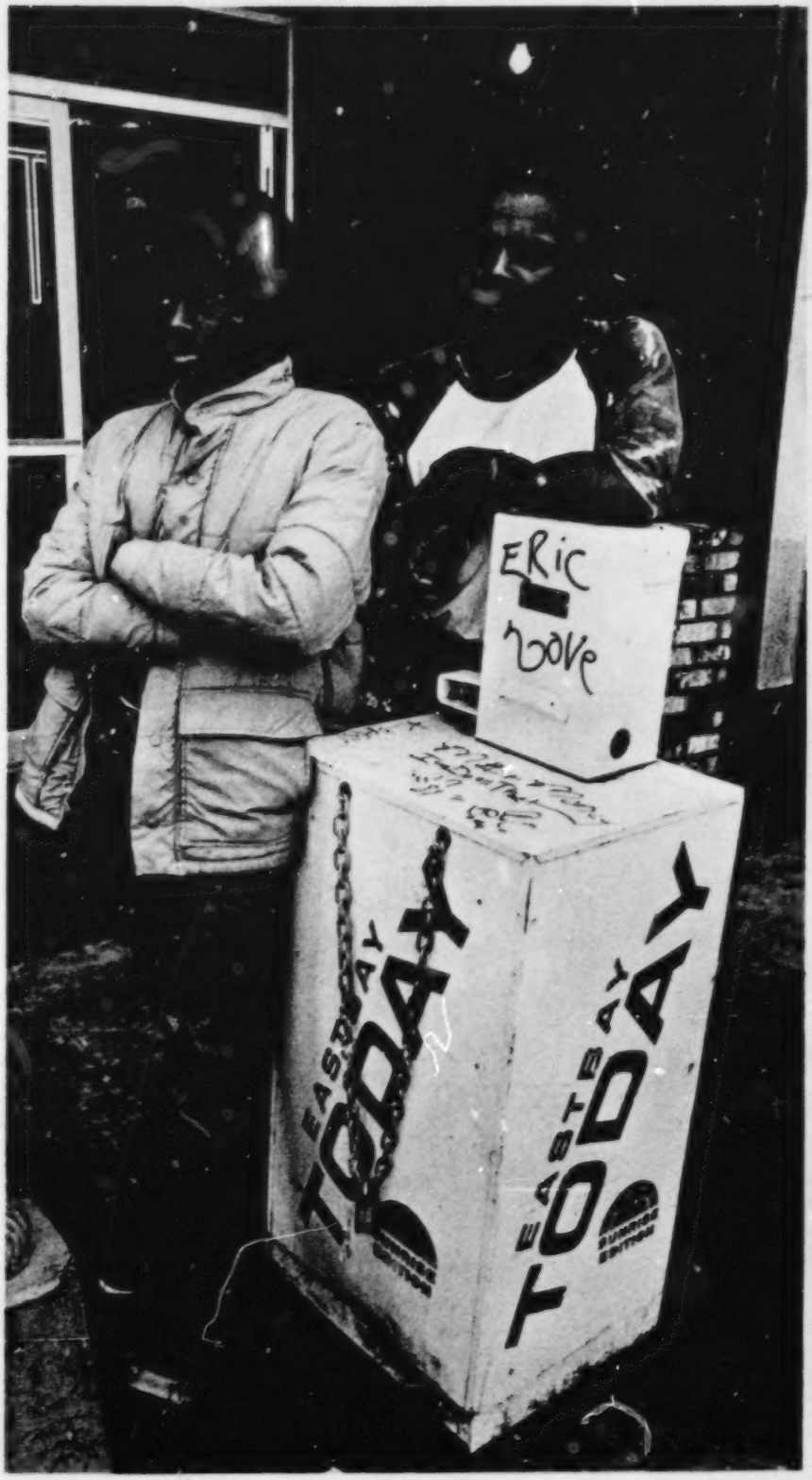


Photo by Joffrè Clarke

Without relevant education and learning, there is little hope for the future.

Photo courtesy Oakland Public Schools ➤

2 Vocational Education: The School System's Stepchild

Findings:

- *Vocational education is the stepchild of Oakland's secondary schools. The emphasis of the high school curriculum is preparation for college entrance.*
- *Student demand for programs and the availability of teachers more often dictate which vocational programs are offered rather than the needs of the labor market.*
- *Obstacles to the acquisition of occupational skills are State-mandated requirements for graduation, school scheduling and the lack of a structured vocational curriculum.*
- *Attempts to reform vocational education in Oakland have been too modest to meet the training needs of the 1,500 vocational students who graduate each year.*

The organization and content of the vocational education curriculum within the six comprehensive high schools communicate to students, parents, and educators that the world of work is less important than a college education. The major focus of the curriculum is preparation for a two-year or four-year college education. From the 7th to the 12th grade, all students must complete 13 credits in required academic subjects and 8 credits in electives to fulfill the requirements for a high school diploma in the State of California. The 8 elective credits may be chosen from other academic subjects, or from art, music and vocational education. In reality most students have only 1 or 2 elective courses from which to choose because other electives are spent on proficiency classes, repeating a required course or additional academic work to strengthen college preparation.

The *Facts Bulletin for Middle, Junior and Senior High Schools* issued by the Oakland Public Schools (OPS) provides detailed information about entrance requirements for state colleges and universities. The official advice to students is:

> *Regardless of your future occupational goals, you should consider the various post-high school educational programs.*

In contrast little is said about requirements for entering the labor force:

> *If you choose courses in one of the fields of Business Education, Homemaking, Fine Arts and Industrial Education, they may help prepare you to enter the labor force with a saleable skill. Many types of jobs are available that contribute to the economy and the progress of the nation. (Emphasis added).*

With the required courses for high school graduation taking up a majority of a student's time and with the school district's recommendation that students prepare for postsecondary education regardless of their occupational goals, there is less time, attention and emphasis on training for immediate employment. The school system does a disservice to many students who do not elect college or are not ready for it.

Who is enrolled in which vocational programs?

Vocational education is provided in regular vocational education classes and through Regional Occupational Programs (ROP's). Approximately 45% of the enrollment is in the regular programs and 55% in the Regional Occupational Programs.

Determining accurately how many students are enrolled in vocational education in each of Oakland's six comprehensive high schools is impossible. OPS's Department of Research and Evaluation publishes total enrollment figures for each school in the district, but it does not compile data on vocational students. The district must report to the State regularly the aggregate enrollment in each occupation but not for individual schools. The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education conducted a nationwide survey of vocational schools in the fall of 1979 which reports enrollment by program, by grade level, and by school. Although we used the more detailed federal survey of Oakland's high schools, we cannot obtain reliable figures. McClymonds High School, for example, claimed almost twice as many pupils in vocational education as there are students in the school. Despite these problems, we show (see opposite page) the best data we could find for the total enrollment of all students and of vocational students in the six comprehensive high schools in the fall of 1979.

Prior to arriving at the senior high schools, students may have elected to take Career Exploration, Homemaking, Industrial Education, Typing or Consumer Education. In the 10th, 11th and 12th grades, there are more specialized classes organized by occupational areas. The highest number of vocational students is in Office Occupations, followed by Trades and Industry. The third largest enrollment is in Home Economics. Distributive Education, that is retail and wholesale occupations, is the fourth largest area. Health Occupations has the fewest students.

Regular vocational education

Regular vocational education is financed by the OPS's General Fund and by some federal vocational education money. These classes are not subject to special state requirements.

Regular classes are a single period in the

School	Total Enrollment Grades 10-12	Vocational Enrollment Grades 10-12
Skyline	2,006	1,318
Oakland High	1,936	1,275
Oakland Tech	1,493	1,000
McClymonds	1,111	2,030
Fremont	1,636	1,292
Castlemont	2,063	1,361
Totals	9,247	8,296

school day and are considered to be prevocational and exploratory. They provide students with exposure to an occupational area and serve as feeder programs to the ROP's. Teachers told us that their classes are not designed to equip students with marketable skills. Their purpose is to prepare students for ROP's or postsecondary training, even though the advanced course may repeat some of what they have already learned.

Students also enroll in the regular programs for other reasons unrelated to work. Some students consider a vocational class as an easy way to complete high school graduation requirements. Others seek the acquisition of personal skills, such as typing, cooking, sewing or auto repair.

Regional Occupational Programs (ROP's)

ROP's are intended to prepare students for the job market or for advanced occupational training at junior colleges and private technical schools. They are called regional because they are open to any senior high school student in the Oakland, Emeryville, Piedmont and Alameda school districts. Unlike regular vocational classes, most ROP's require 2 class periods and must be approved by the State Department of Education.

Thirty-three Regional Occupational Programs are operated by the Oakland Public Schools: 13 in Office Occupations, 7 in Home Economics and 13 in Trades and Industries. Twenty-nine of the ROP's are located at the 8 senior high schools, including Dewey and Grant Continuation Schools. The 4 ROP's in Merchandising are offered at the downtown facility known as Baymart.

State requirements govern the operation of ROP's. In order for a district to establish a ROP and receive supplemental state funds, the California Education Code requires that local school authorities demonstrate a job market for the program and show that the proposed ROP does not duplicate any other program already in existence. Formerly, a ROP had to enroll 20% of its students from schools other than the one at which it was located in order to ensure its regional character. But that requirement was withdrawn because districts found it difficult to comply with, and it was costing the State too much to monitor.

California school districts receive more state dollars for each ROP student than they do for each regular vocational education pupil because the State recognizes the increased costs incurred by ROP's in meeting state requirements. According to a state official, there is an incentive for school systems to develop more ROP's in times of declining enrollment. Oakland has not done so. In fact, ROP enrollment in Oakland has declined by 50% since 1975. OPS calculates that this enrollment decline has resulted in a revenue loss to the district of $988,274.

What is the cause of the decline?

ROP's are regional in name only. All ROP teachers whom we interviewed said that they rarely had students from other schools. Although free transportation is provided, it takes time out of the school day. ROP's are not well known to students. Teachers told us that they do not have time to recruit students beyond their own school. Many students learn about these programs too late to take the preparatory vocational classes. Meeting graduation requirements and proficiency standards also makes it difficult for students to find time for a 2-period ROP class. The instructor of a unique ROP at Skyline High School which trains students for jobs in automobile insurance firms told us that although job prospects for this occupation were good and his recruitment efforts strenuous, he had trouble finding the maximum number of enrollees for his program, even within the Skyline student body.

Baymart

Located in downtown Oakland, Baymart offers 4 Regional Occupational Programs. Three are in the merchandise field: General Merchandising, General Office Clerk and Merchandise Handling. The fourth is a Bank Teller program. These 4 ROP's are the only ones in Oakland offered at a centralized location, more accessible to public transportation and places of employment than are the high schools.

Baymart's ROP classes are always full. Approximately 275 students attend. Students are drawn to the facility by the prospect of getting jobs and by the small classes and individual instruction. Basic skills and proficiency requirements are taught along with occupational skills. Thirty percent of the students are working part-time, although this proportion increases during periods of peak retail sales such as the holidays. Non-working students spend 2 class periods at Baymart in occupational training and 4 periods at their home high school taking required courses. When they achieve a certain skill proficiency, students are ready for placement in part-time employment. A number of Baymart students have completed most of their required courses and are concerned about getting a job.

Planning programs and measuring their success

Does the Oakland school system plan its vocational education curriculum to meet the needs of the labor market? How does it measure whether Regional Occupational Programs are fulfilling their mandated purpose? These are questions that must be answered to determine if the educational system is supplying workers that the local economy demands.

When asked how they decide what programs to offer, eliminate, expand, or reduce, Oakland School officials cite three factors: student demand, teacher availability and time in the schedule. When pressed about labor market conditions, they refer to the district-wide and occupational advisory committees composed of educational officials and representatives of employers and businesses. Their chief function is to suggest new equipment and modifications of curriculum. But advisory committee recommendations have resulted in the termination of vocational programs such as Service Station, Small Appliance Repair, and Aviation.

Employers are rarely involved directly in the planning and design of vocational training for occupations in which there are promising job opportunities. There are, however, some notable exceptions. The insurance program at Skyline, Invest, provides training for writing auto insurance policies and settling claims, positions for which the average starting salary is $4.50 an hour. The insurance companies themselves initiated the program and have made investments in outfitting the classroom and providing supplies. All graduates who desire part- or full-time employment can usually get it because the instructor works closely with employers to place students.

The Respiratory Therapy Technician program at Oakland High is another unique program which prepares students for immediate employment in Bay Area hospitals and for the national test that certifies these health care professionals. It is affiliated with Peralta and Children's Hospitals which provide worksite training in the spring semester to complement the classroom training in the fall. While full-time jobs as respiratory technicians are limited, students can find part-time work in the field which enables them to earn money and gain experience as they continue their education or search for full-time employment.

Other Regional Occupational Programs appear to have little labor market justification. The Child Services program at Oakland High is described in OPS's literature as preparing students for entry-level positions as instructional aides and child attendants in schools, public health agencies and recreation departments. According to the instructor, persons qualify for these positions only after completing a junior college course and state certification requirements. Furthermore, there is a low demand for uncertified child care workers. The program essentially provides interested students with an opportunity for volunteer positions so that they can become familiar with the work.

The Fashion Merchandising ROP at Skyline was initiated by its instructor and approved by the central office, although the goal is to provide a general introduction to the fashion industry. In fact, the instructor told us, completion of her course does not lead directly to jobs in fashion merchandising. Students can be employed as inventory or sales clerks, the same training Baymart provides. According to the teacher, most of the students were not interested in entry-level jobs but were looking for an easy and interesting course to round out their last year of high school.

The only measure of Oakland's vocational education programs is an annual post card survey. Students who complete regular and ROP classes are normally asked to return the card 4 months after graduation. Sixty-three percent of the 1,216 program completers in June 1978 returned their post cards. Fifty-one percent of the regular vocational education students and 54% of the ROP students said that they were employed full- or part-time in the field for which they were trained. More ROP students, 35% in comparison to 30% of the regular vocational program students, were attending college or trade school.

By combining all vocational graduates, this survey masks individual program success and failure. Furthermore, the self-response survey does not define what "employment in the field" means so that students may be reporting any job no matter how remotely it may be related to their training. The post card does not ask whether students found their job as a result of their vocational training. It is simply assumed that vocational education, not other factors, led to employment. Furthermore, the 450 students or 37% of the program completers who did *not* return their post cards are more than likely the very persons who are unemployed and do not wish to admit it. The school district's report fails to consider this. Instead it takes delusory comfort in survey results which show 3% of *respondents* unemployed while the total teenage unemployment rate was 16.1% and black teenage unemployment in the United States was 35.5% in February 1979.

Photo courtesy Oakland Public Schools

Worksite training complements classroom instruction.

Scheduling vocational education

Planning a sequence of vocational classes that would equip students with marketable skills while meeting all graduation requirements has numerous obstacles. In order for students to accomplish these two objectives, they must commit themselves to an occupational goal early enough, normally in the 9th grade, so that they can use the 8 elective credits to take as many related courses as possible. A desired vocational class may be scheduled for the same period as a required subject. If too few students sign up for an advanced class, it simply is not offered. Such training is therefore postponed until students get to junior college. If it is difficult to fit in a regular vocational class that meets for only 1 period, it is even harder to find time for a 2-period ROP.

Knowing what courses to take and which skills are required for employment poses problems for students. What is lacking is a planned sequence of courses and knowledgeable counselors to guide students through the selection process. Oakland's high schools do not have full time, specialized vocational guidance counselors. The average counselor to student ratio is over 300 to 1, and counselors' major interest is that students complete high school graduation requirements. With vocational education treated as the stepchild of the high school curriculum, counselors have less information about courses needed for the job market than they do for college entrance. Yet it is the counselors whom students must rely on for planning their vocational curriculum.

Attempts to reform vocational education

The Oakland Public Schools administration has proposed two reforms to increase the enrollment in Regional Occupational Programs. One motivation for these changes is declining enrollment in ROP programs and the consequent loss of almost 1 million dollars in state revenue. The other is a recognition that present practices are ineffective in providing students with the direction and instruction needed to develop entry-level employment skills.

The Pre-Career Major Plan approved by the School Board and implemented last Sep-

tember is a first and modest step. The plan has two parts. Beginning in 1980-81, 1 guidance counselor in each high school has been identified as the counselor who is expected to spend 20% of his or her time counseling Pre-Career Major students. The goal is to have 100 students enrolled as Pre-Career Majors by the end of the current school year. The expectation is that with 20% of one counselor's time devoted to vocational guidance students will get better advice on career planning, the availability of ROP's in other schools, and the related classes that would develop their occupational skills.

The second feature of the Pre-Career Plan is a very minor change in required graduation credits for Pre-Career Majors. For Pre-Career Major students who enroll in at least 4 identified and related vocational courses, one-half unit of a social science elective in the 11th grade and one-half unit in the 12th grade may be waived. This means that these students may take vocational classes instead of a social science course, but the vocational courses chosen must be "closely related to a regular social science elective," according to the Administration Bulletin 5012. The replaceable social science electives are various ethnic history and culture courses, Sociology, Economics, Psychology, Humanities and Introduction to Law. To find a vocational course that is "closely related" to one of these elective social science classes requires a liberal interpretation of School Board policy. One official cited Business Law as an example.

The second reform which has been proposed but not implemented is the centralization of Office Occupations programs in a Baymart-like facility in the downtown area. According to an internal school system memorandum, the centralization of selected ROP business education programs was designed to meet "the regionalization requirement..., thus ensuring continued income." That "few stenographers and few accounting majors will graduate out of 2,500 seniors this year in a city where 51.4% of the jobs are in the office area is a clear indication that something is wrong," the memorandum observes.

The Oakland school system has not implemented this plan because it has been unable to locate any downtown space. The Baymart facility has no room for expansion. Not even one classroom in the Division of Learning Building on 10th Street could be vacated so that data processing and key punch programs could be located next to the district's own computer center. One school official remarked that public opposition has deterred the school board from closing small, underutilized elementary or junior high schools, but that same official admitted that those facilities would not be suitable.

The reasons behind the Pre-Career Major Plan and the centralization of Office Occupations were clearly motivated by school officials' desire to increase ROP enrollment and thus generate more income and to ensure that vocational graduates acquire the skills necessary for employment.

However, with 1,500 vocational students graduating every year (approximately 60% of all students) and a projected 100 Pre-Career Majors this year, the Oakland Public Schools has a long way to go in redesigning its vocational curriculum.

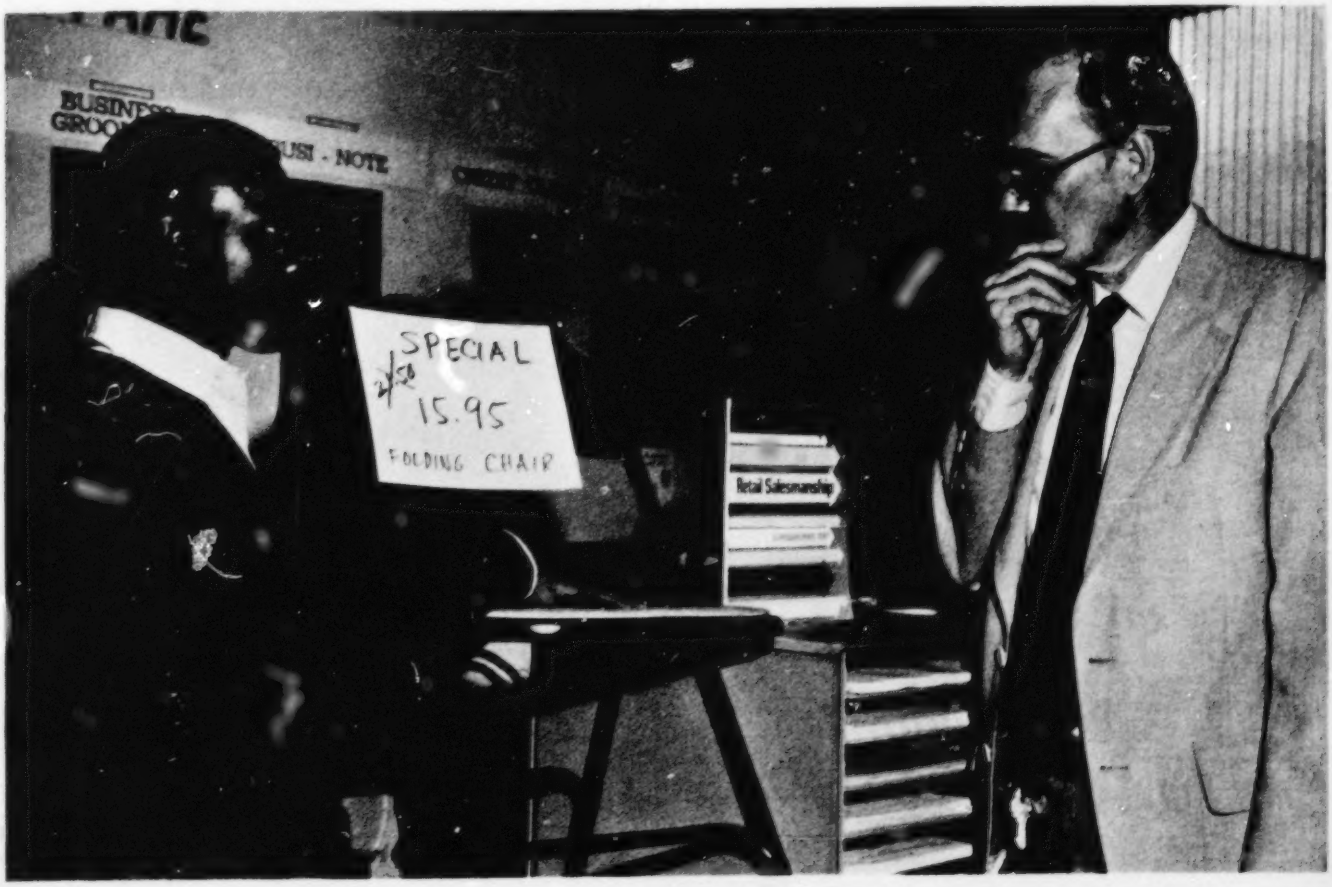


Photo courtesy Oakland Public Schools

Baymart's Merchandising Programs attract students because of job prospects, small classes and individualized attention.

3 Transition from Classroom to Workplace: A Missing Link in Oakland

Findings

- *The vital component of vocational education — linking classroom and worksite training — is missing in Oakland.*
- *Vocational programs lack job placements for students and graduates.*
- *Experience gained from two projects which link students and employers has not been integrated into Oakland's vocational programs.*

Effective vocational training must include on-the-job experience with equipment and procedures and inculcate disciplined work habits. Does the Oakland school system assist students in making the transition from the classroom to the workplace?

Work experience programs

Approximately 900 Oakland high school students work part-time during the school year. They receive a maximum of 4 units of academic credit if they register through their schools for either the Vocational Work Experience Program or the Other Work Experience Program (OWE).

The Vocational Work Experience Program is chiefly for Baymart students enrolled in the Merchandising and Bank Teller programs who obtain jobs in retail stores and banks. For these 80 to 90 students, employment is related to their vocational classroom training. The school district assists many of these students in locating jobs, but others find work on their own initiative.

The Other Work Experience Program is open to any high school student who wants part-time employment. These jobs are typically in fast-food chains, restaurants, department stores and other retail businesses. Public and private non-profit agencies, such as the school district, the Red Cross and the YMCA, also hire part-time students. These jobs are not related to vocational training. They do not equip students with skills that lead to higher-paying jobs or careers with upward mobility. But part-time employment in high schools does provide students with a work record about which employers always inquire when considering job applicants.

Cooperative education programs

Unlike many school systems in California and other states, Oakland does not have Cooperative Vocational Education, the vocational program in which schools and employers jointly provide supervised classroom instruction and work. If there is a joint, written agreement between the employer and the school, federal vocational education funds may underwrite the employer's cost of providing on-the-job training as well as the school's cost of operating the program.

The key to Cooperative Vocational Education is the direct and mutually beneficial link between the classroom and the workplace. The advantage to the student is that he or she can often parlay a "Co-op" job into a permanent position. Employers have an opportunity to train "Co-op" students in their own methods and a period of time to judge them as prospective employees. There is no requirement that the student be hired later, but employers who have made an investment in training are more likely to keep a tested worker than to take a chance on an unknown person.

Job placement

Other than the Baymart programs, there is no formally structured and coordinated job placement program either for students enrolled in vocational classes and Regional Occupational Programs or graduates of those programs. There is no job placement staff at the high schools or central office to find part-time employment directly related to vocational students' classroom instruction. Vocational teachers told us that they did not have time to locate jobs for their students which would provide practical application of the skills they are learning in school.

Despite the absence of a formal job placement program, some vocational students are working in the occupational area of their training. Students may find jobs on their own initiative. Counselors may refer them to employers, like Home Savings and Loan, for on-the-job training programs. Employers sometimes contact the head of a school's Business Education Department or an individual instructor to seek students for after-school work.

Transition From School-To-Work: Summer 1980

The Oakland Public Schools operated a pilot project in the summer of 1980 for 253 "socio-economically deprived students" who were graduating seniors of vocational programs. This CETA-funded progam provided both classroom instruction in how to find a job and paid work experience in a setting approximating, as closely as possible, the students' vocational training. Sixty-three Oakland employers hired participating students for a varying number of weeks. Jobs were located in convalescent and retirement homes, restaurants, retail stores, bus companies, electronic and scientific laboratories, and two military bases.

The program's goals were (1) to enhance the transition from school to work for CETA-eligible students and (2) to enable employers to locate prospective employees while contributing to the educational training of students. "If provided on an annual basis and expanded to assist other vocational education graduates," other project evaluation states, "this transition from school to work project would provide a motivating influence designed to encourage more effective career planning of students in our public schools. Ultimately, this would result in a better prepared vocational education graduate and assist in the reduction of teenage unemployment."

Evaluation of the project was based primarily on a post card survey of 68% of the participants. The project was rated very successful, chiefly on the grounds that 24% of the responding participants were working full-time and 72% were continuing their education. The evaluation does not say how many of the 63 participating employers retained their summer students in full-time jobs, nor do we know whether similar results would have been achieved for vocational graduates without this summer experience.

By the evaluation's own admission, the Transition From School-to-Work: Summer 1980 project compensated for deficiencies in the vocational program. If the high schools incorporated in their vocational programs career planning and instruction in job applications and interviews, would there be any need for a summer program? If cooperative education programs closely coordinated with employers were an integral part of all regular and ROP classes, would such a summer program be necessary? If the school district had a job placement program for graduating seniors, would not these students already have found jobs?

New Oakland Committee: Employment/Education Project

The New Oakland Committee is a coalition of business, union and minority leaders in which the Oakland school district participates through its Superintendent. In March 1980 the Committee launched the Employment/Education Project with state and private funding.

This project recruits vocational students from high schools and community colleges, provides a 6-day orientation class, and sends them out for job interviews. At the same time, a job developer contacts employers to enlist their cooperation. Businesses and companies are asked to utilize an existing vacancy or create a job at the pre-entry or trainee level for 6 months. The job must pay the minimum wage or the employer's starting salary, whichever is higher. Potential for upward mobility in the job must exist. Each position is filled by 2 students who work part-time and attend school the rest of the day.

Each stage of the project is highly selective. Approximately 1 out of 4 recruited students is chosen for and completes the orientation. Project staff interview recruits to determine if they have the occupational skills, career goals and "C" average to qualify as suitable candidates for the kinds of jobs which employers have provided. Because most of the jobs are

Neither the transition from School-to-Work: Summer 1980 nor the Employment/Education Projects reach young people already failed by the schools!

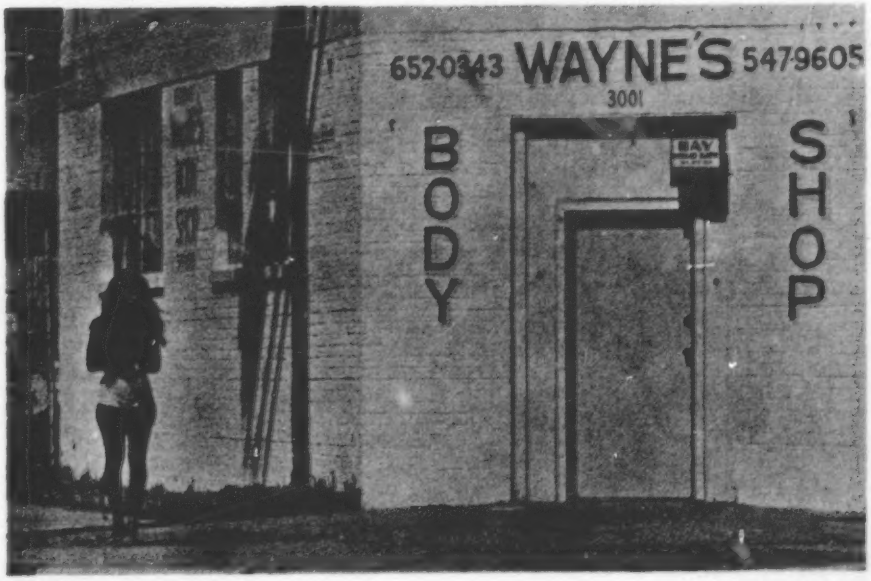


Photo by Joffrè Clarke

Photo by Joffrè Clarke

The Supervisory Committee and staff of the New Oakland Committee's Employment/Education Project discuss job placements such as those shown below: working as a secretary at Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. and junior clerk at Kaiser Engineers, Inc.

Photos courtesy New Oakland Committee

clerical in nature, office training and career goals are sought in potential candidates. As a result, the majority of the participants are young women. Most are black. Those students who are not selected for the project at this point are referred back to their high school or college counselor, usually with comments about their lack of career goals, work history or job attitudes.

Even those who are selected for the orientation are "woefully unprepared" for the job market, according to the Project Director. The students do not know how to prepare a resume, fill out a job application, or conduct themselves in an interview. Orientation is devoted to coaching students in these job search skills. There is no time for instruction in basic skills or in test-taking. However, a spelling test was added to the orientation after applicants for a position at the Oakland *Tribune* had difficulty passing a spelling test.

From among those who complete the orientation, 4 students are sent to interview for 1 job. Companies do their own interviewing and select 2 students for each position. They may require any application procedure or pre-employment test that is normally required of an applicant. For the 6-month period of part-time employment, employers are expected to provide training and supervision. The Project staff, the employer and the student worker decide on which relevant vocational class the student should take.

Few of the companies participating in the Employment/Education Project guarantee full-time jobs at the conclusion of the 6-month period. Most employers say they will hire students if a position is available. However, there may be 2 candidates to fill 1 vacancy. Other students may not be able to work full-time because they are going to school. As of March 10, 1981, 398 students had applied for the Project but only 123 were accepted for orientation. Of the 123, 88, or 71.5%, had been placed in part-time jobs, 24 had been terminated and the remaining students were still in orientation. Of the 88 students working part-time, slightly over half (45) had made the transition to full-time employment, 27 were still in part-time jobs, and 16 had been terminated. Overall 22.3% of those student who had originally applied secured part-time work and 11% had found full-time employment.

The value of on-the-job training

Making the transition from school to work requires more than classroom training in occupational skills. Putting learning to practice in actual work settings, plus knowing how and where to find jobs, are also necessary.

As a part of our Project, LDF interviewed 25 former Oakland high school students, all but 3 of whom were working at the time we talked to them. Ten had been participants in the New Oakland Committee's Employment/Education Project. All were currently enrolled in junior college. We asked how these young people rated their three sources of training: high school, junior college, and on-the-job training. Virtually all of those interviewed ranked on-the-job training as the most valuable followed by junior college classes. High school vocational training was ranked last. Few felt that high school education prepared them for their present employment, although some thought that their vocational education might be useful in the future.

Compared to the school system's efforts to prepare students for higher learning, very little attention indeed is paid to helping students make the transition from school to work. Both are important.

Photo by Joffrè Clarke

Oakland faces an enormous problem because existing training and work programs make only a small dent in black youth unemployment.

4 From the Employers' Perspective

Findings:

- *Oakland employers seeking basic skills and work discipline in job applicants find recent high school graduates lacking in both.*
- *Employers report little contact with or knowledge of high school vocational programs.*
- *Vocational training in high school is currently not enhancing young persons' employment prospects.*

The NAACP Legal Defense Fund interviewed personnel officials and managers of 19 Oakland companies. Although this is a limited sample, we reached many of the city's major businesses. The emergence of common themes in employers' responses gives us confidence in the validity of our findings.

A striking number of Oakland employers knew little or nothing about vocational education in the high schools, including the specialized ROP's. Moreover, vocational training appeared to impact insignificantly upon a young person's employment prospects. Employers support the *concept* of vocational education, but what they look for in applicants for entry-level jobs is previous history of actual work experience, maturity, and skill training above the high school level. With the number of applicants exceeding by more than 10 times the number of entry-level job openings, employers are free to choose the most experienced persons. Recent high school graduates with minimum skills and little or no work history face very tough competition indeed in gaining a toehold in the labor market.

The labor market for entry-level jobs

Employment opportunities are unevenly distributed among Oakland companies. Many of the largest have few entry-level openings, that is, jobs for recent high school graduates. Kaiser Aluminum, for example, has over 1,200 employees, but only 12 entry-level openings each year. Clorox, with more than 700 employees, has only 4 openings annually in this category. The chart above reports the estimated number of entry-level jobs of Oakland's major employers.

ESTIMATED ENTRY LEVEL VACANCIES AVAILABLE ANNUALLY AMONG MAJOR OAKLAND EMPLOYERS

Capwell's	300
City of Oakland	35-50
Clorox	4
Kaiser Aluminum	12
Kaiser Engineers, Inc.	12
Montgomery Ward	60
Alameda Naval Air Station	100
Pacific Gas & Electric	36
Pacific Telephone & Telegraph	1200
Payless Drug Stores	100
Sears Auto Shop	5

The employers we interviewed had a wide variety of positions, including stock and inventory clerk, sales clerk, auto helper, mail sorter, messenger, receptionist, file clerk and typist.

Major retail establishments make the most of high school aged labor. Capwell's Department Store has approximately 300 entry-level positions and Payless Drug Stores hires an estimated 100 entry-level employees each year. The federal government is an important employer in the Bay Area. The Alameda Naval Air Station reports hiring a large number of Oakland youth for its annual 100 entry-level jobs.

Depending upon the job category, some companies require a test as part of the application process to measure skill proficiencies and to reduce the large pool of applicants to a manageable number for careful screening. PT&T, with basic skills tests for 3 different job categories, reported a failure rate of between 50% and 80%. PG&E also tests for basic and occupational skills, with a 50% failure rate. Applicants for typing positions are always tested; the standard is usually 35 to 55 words per minute. Even people applying for janitorial jobs with the City of Oakland are tested.

What do employers look for?

Our interviews asked employers what characteristics they sought in new employees. They listed a variety of skills and qualities. Despite the different types of jobs for which they sought workers, they all agreed on 4 qualities:

- Punctuality and good attendance
- Eagerness and willingness to work
- Sense of responsibility
- Prior work experience

Frequently, but not universally, they mentioned in no order of importance:

- Maturity
- Good grammar, spelling and math
- Ability to follow directions and complete a task
- Ability to think on their own and solve problems
- Getting along with others
- Ability to speak clearly
- Appropriate appearance
- Test-taking ability

Most noteworthy about this list is the absence of any mention of occupational skills. Employers are interested in applicants with occupational skills and will hire them if they can find them. But by their very nature, many entry-level jobs for which high school graduates are typically eligible, do not require occupational skills. Employers are far more interested in good basic skills and previous work experience. Many companies provide their own training.

Employers' view of vocational education students

Most employers whom we interviewed knew little or nothing about OPS's vocational programs, but those who did had con-

tact with Baymart, although some confused it with the East Bay Skills Center (a junior college level program). The only other programs that employers knew about were special projects such as the New Oakland Committee's Employment/Education Project and the Transition from School-to-Work: Summer 1980 program.

These employers found vocational students and graduates lacking in some or all of the skills they seek as desirable in entry-level employees. A few complained that Baymart had represented its students as trained office workers, but they could not type, file, or take phone messages. Capwell's told us that it was a "hit and miss proposition" as to whether Baymart graduates would be skilled, productive workers. Frequently, they are comparable in skills to other applicants, but the personnel department expressed disappointment with the skills and job readiness of Baymart students. Usually they know the terminology and how to operate a cash register, but they are deficient in initiative, reliability, and basic skills.

Other employers who had participated in special programs for high school youth felt that students were under-skilled. Consequently, they created different and lower standards by which to evaluate them. And in some instances, high school students were unable to meet even these standards. Kaiser Aluminum placed 15 high school students in clerical positions in the spring of 1980. In the normal application process, Kaiser Aluminum requires 55 words per minute on a typing test. The high school students were simply asked to type a non-timed statement. Their skills were so inadequate that the company rejected half of the applicants.

Employers were most critical of the skill levels of students in summer programs. In many instances, these individuals were not screened. As one personnel director stated: "We take whomever they send us." Employers rarely hire students in permanent part- or full-time jobs at the end of the summer. Summer student workers are not considered "real" employees. That companies participate in these summer jobs programs is more a manifestation of their corporate good will than of their confidence in this source of employees.

It is entirely possible that students referred to businesses through these summer programs are not a representative sample of the product of Oakland's vocational education programs. These programs are usually CETA-funded and are aimed at providing jobs and exposure to the work environment for economically disadvantaged youngsters. CETA-eligible students are likely to have had less success in school than their more advantaged peers. In any case, students who find summer jobs on their own are not the ones for whom CETA programs are designed and do not come into contact with employers through these programs.

Does vocational education improve the job prospects of high school graduates?

What is the effect of high school vocational training in Oakland? Can high school graduates find employment in the areas for which they have been trained? To answer these questions, we examined more closely the entry-level opportunities for auto mechanics, clerical workers and draftsmen—those occupations in which the school district offers ROP's and in which vocational programs have relatively high enrollments. We found a gap between the skills learned in the ROP's and the minimum requirements in the workplace.

Our interviews revealed that individuals applying for auto mechanics positions in Oakland must have junior college training, full-time work experience and a license. Auto shops do hire high school graduates as installers, positions which can lead to higher-paying jobs.

In the clerical field, entry-level positions have varying requirements. Major companies, Clorox, Kaiser Engineers, Kaiser Aluminum, and the City of Oakland, for example, all require 1 or 2 years full-time work experience. Other employers' requirements were less stringent. Applicants demonstrating strong clerical skills are often hired even if they have no full-time work experience. But high school graduates of a business education program are more likely to be hired in lower-paying receptionist and file clerk jobs. On the whole, vocational training does not prepare individuals for secretarial positions.

The ROP Drafting program at Skyline and Oakland Technical High Schools purports to prepare students for entry-level positions as junior drafters or tracers, but none of the companies we interviewed considers high school preparation as adequate for their entry-level positions. Kaiser Aluminum, Kaiser Engineers, and Brown and Root (a San Francisco firm) all require potential employees to have postsecondary training and/or work experience. Kaiser Aluminum and Kaiser Engineers told us that when they do hire high school graduates, it is for jobs in the mailroom "that don't open up that often."

It did not seem to matter to employers whether applicants had taken vocational courses, for this information was not asked for on the application form or during the interview. The manager of the Sears Auto Shop had never heard of the Automotive Trades ROP at Skyline and Oakland Technical High Schools, but he knew about the community college program and thought highly of it. The personnel department of Payless Drug Stores did not know about the Checker/Cashier ROP at McClymonds High School.

Bay Area Rapid Press was totally unaware that Castlemont and Oakland High Schools both have a Printing ROP which the district's *Regional Occupational Centers Program Offerings* says prepares students to become offset pressmen apprentices and print shop helpers. The school system's literature also describes printing as "one of the largest career fields in the Bay Area." The owner/operator of Bay Area Rapid Press told us that he has 4 entry-level openings each year in graphics, bindery or printing. He has hired high school students in the past as part-time workers but found them not as productive as full-time workers. He could not comment on the quality of training in the ROP printing program because he knew nothing about it. The owner of this printing establishment did not weigh vocational training as particularly significant. Experienced applicants are preferred.

Home Savings and Loan Associations has a bank teller trainee program that involves 60 high schools and 3,600 high school students throughout California (including Oakland). In 2 sections a year, 30 students attend training sessions for 2 hours a day for 15 weeks. Guided by the bank's requirements, high school counselors refer students to the program. At the end of the school year, Home Savings and Loan offers summer employment to the top 10% of the student group. Students who have performed successfully are offered permanent employment with the bank. The Home Savings and Loan official who told us about this Career Awareness Program had never heard of Baymart's Bank Teller ROP and was unable to assess whether students entering this program with vocational training fared better than students without vocational training.

Despite ignorance about the Oakland Public Schools' vocational education programs and the negative comments about high school students' and graduates' skills and abilities, some employers did express positive views about high school level vocational training. It indicates an interest in the occupation and it is a sign of promotability. A few employers thought that, all other qualities being equal, vocational education students had a "slight edge" over other applicants. They had better skills, and at least they had "seen the inside of an office" and they were "job ready." But that was distinctly the minority view. There is obviously an enormous gap between employers' needs and expectations and the products of the school system's vocational educaton programs.

5 Federal Funds: Some for Everybody But No Concentration on the Needy

Findings:

- *Forty-four percent of federal funds which could have been spent on Oakland's disadvantaged students was not used.*
- *Oakland returned 18% of the total federal vocational education allocation to the State.*
- *Oakland could make more effective use of federal funds by concentrating resources on high-need students.*

The Oakland Public Schools' total budget for vocational education is $2.4 million of which 83.5% is supplied by the State of California, drawing on standard state tax sources and the yield of a 1% state-wide property tax. After the passage of Proposition 13, school districts effectively lost the right to set a local school tax, and the level of spending per student is determined strictly by state authorities.

The balance of the budget, about 16.5%, comes from the federal government through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 (VEA). While this is a small amount, one of the major goals of the VEA is to equalize vocational training opportunities by distributing money to school systems with large concentrations of high-need students and the most need for financial assistance. The law defines high-need students as those who are educationally disadvantaged, who come from poor families, who have limited-English-speaking ability, and who are handicapped.

The State Department of Education allocated $479,118 in VEA funds to Oakland in the 1979-80 school year. Eighteen percent of the grant ($84,017) was not used. Forty-four percent of the federal funds ($43,595) which could have been targeted on disadvantaged, high-need students was not spent.

Categories and dollars spent

The VEA has several different categories, and under broad federal and state guidelines, money may be spent as local officials see fit as long as the purpose of each part is met.

Category	Allocated	Expended	Unspent	
A	$230,531	$229,010	$21,521	(8.6%)
B	78,223	49,829	28,394	(36.3%)
C	42,892	34,421	8,471	(19.8%)
D	38,846	34,166	4,673	(12.0%)
E	21,060	5,859	15,201	(72.2%)
F	47,566	41,814	5,752	(12.0%)
TOTALS	$479,118	$395,101	$84,017	(18.0%)

A. Basic Grant — The largest and most unrestricted category used for program improvement.
B. Setasides for handicapped students.
C. Setasides for economically and academically disadvantaged students.
D. Guidance and counseling; teacher training.
E. Special programs for disadvantaged students in areas of high school dropouts and unemployment.
F. Consumer and homemaking education.

The highest percentage of unspent money was in categories B and E, specifically designated for disadvantaged, high-need students. The total amount approved in those 2 categories was $99,283 of which $43,595, or 44%, was not spent.

Basic grant

The largest category of VEA funds provided small amounts of general support for classes throughout the district. One-third was spent in the Office of Career, Vocational and Regional Occupational Centers Education

The federal government provides vocational education funds specifically for disadvantaged, high-need youth, but 44% of this money was unspent in Oakland.
Photo by Joffré Clarke

for salaries, administration and instructional materials. The other two-thirds were allocated to vocational classes in junior and senior high schools for equipment, books and instructional supplies. Because high school classes which receive federal money are the regular vocational programs, not the ROP's, these programs are called VEA classes.

In Trades and Industry, for example, the beginning auto shops at Castlemont, Fremont, McClymonds, Oakland High, Oakland Tech and Skyline each received $1,000. Beginning Electronics, Drafting, and Printing shops received $800 each. Money for books, supplies and equipment in senior high Office Occupations was allocated on the basis of $392 per class section. In junior high schools $240 was spent on typing classes, and sums ranging from $400 to $800 were distributed to wood and metal shops and drafting classes.

A memorandum informs secondary school principals that VEA money is to be used for "program improvement," not "program maintenance." Expenditures for "program improvement" must be for equipment, audio-visual materials, textbooks, workbooks, supplementary texts, references and supplies and paper for special class projects. Money may not be spent for large quantities of paper, typewriter ribbons, shop rags or any other standard supply item. Whether the purchase of basic equipment and textbooks is improving a program or just maintaining it is a phony distinction. In practice, the teachers in an occupational area at each school decide collectively on their priority needs and submit vouchers to the principal and central office for approval.

Setasides for disadvantaged and handicapped students

The amounts set aside for disadvantaged and handicapped students are allocated to individual classes, not as flat grants, but on the basis of individual students whom the teacher identifies as lacking communication or computational skills or as deficient in "attitudinal or socio-economic skills." Teachers may request money for instructional aides and student instructors, as well as for books, supplies and equipment. At the end of the semester or year, teachers are asked to evaluate the instructional improvement of each student whom they had identified as disadvantaged or handicapped.

When teachers do not request these special funds, they may be reallocated to other classes. In fact, 36% of the money in this category is not spent at all.

Federal law requires that money under the setasides for disadvantaged and handicapped be spent on half the "excess cost" of providing vocational education for these students. If it costs a school district $1,000 to provide vocational training for a non-handicapped or non-disadvantaged student but $1,500 for one who is disadvantaged or handicapped, then federal funds may pay $250 per student, or half the difference between $1,000 and $1,500. In other words, this federal money is intended to help schools pay the extra costs of educating these high-need students.

Whether money is spent in Oakland's schools as intended by the law or whether individually identified students get anything extra is impossible to determine from official records or from classroom visits. There is no record of the costs per pupil for regular students as compared with handicapped and disadvantaged students. The special classes in which these identified students are enrolled are designated as "Vocational Education Oriented" and are designed to provide employability skills. The definition of "employability skills" or any measure of improvement is extremely vague. How does one measure improvement in "socio-economic skills?" It is also difficult to know whether the services and equipment purchased with these funds benefit only the disadvantaged and handicapped.

Given all these unknowns, it seems reasonable to conclude that the setaside money is treated like the other Basic Grant funds—general all-purpose money.

Special programs for the disadvantaged

Another separate category of money for disadvantaged students must be spent on the *full cost* of special programs in areas of high youth unemployment and school dropouts so that students may receive extra help in order to succeed in vocational education. Not only was this money not used as required by the VEA, almost three-quarters of it was not spent.

Instead of funding the full cost of special programs in 1 or 2 areas of Oakland with the highest unemployment and school dropout rates, the money was allocated on a per capita basis to all 8 high schools, as the chart demonstrates.

When we inquired why this special money to hire instructional aides for disadvantaged students was allocated to all schools rather than to 1 or 2 with the most need, an OPS official replied: "We get so little, we just give some to everybody." When we asked why so much of the money went unspent, we were told that aides were not hired because of bureaucratic delays.

Consumer and homemaking education

The Vocational Education Act provides federal money for instructional programs and ancillary services for the occupation of homemaking, including consumer education, food and nutrition, family living, parenthood education, child development, housing and home management, and clothing and textiles.

Unlike the Basic Grant and Handicapped and Disadvantaged setasides, federal law is very explicit that funds are available *only* to support programs which:

1. encourage the participation of males and females to prepare for combined roles of homemaker and wage-earner;
2. encourage the elimination of sex

Photo by Joffré Clarke

During the school hours, waiting for the day to pass.

PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE OF SPECIAL DISADVANTAGED FUNDS

School	% Students from Families Receiving AFDC	No. Disadv. Students in Voc. Ed.	No. Disadv. Students To Be Served	Amount Special Funds	Per capita Expend. Col. 5 ÷ 4
Castlemont	59.7%	460	45	$3,510	$78
Fremont	47.0	310	40	3,120	78
McClymonds	68.3	201	40	3,120	78
Oakland High	24.4	244	40	3,120	78
Oakland Tech	48.6	300	40	3,120	78
Skyline	1.1	150	25	1,950	78
Dewey	n.a.	110	20	1,560	78
Grant	n.a.	90	20	1,560	78

stereotyping by promoting sex-fair curriculum materials;

3. give greater consideration to economic, social, and cultural conditions and needs, especially in economically depressed areas, and where appropriate, bilingual instruction;
4. encourage outreach programs in communities for youth and adults;
5. prepare males and females who have entered or who will be entering the work of the home; and
6. emphasize consumer and parenthood education, management of resources, promotion of nutritional knowledge and the use of foods.

Oakland was granted $47,566 for Consumer and Homemaking programs in the 1979-80 school year. According to a central office official, all Home Economics teachers in Oakland get together and decide how to divide up the money. More than half (57%) of the grant was allocated for salaries for teachers to attend meetings, to pay substitutes for their classes, and to fund other teachers to develop curriculum materials.

Thirty percent of the grant, or $14,141, was parceled out in paltry amounts to 35 teachers in 19 schools for instructional supplies and equipment. Thirty teachers of regular Home Economics classes received $355 each. Five ROP teachers received $100 each. Eighteen schools got a $100 bonus. Four hundred forty-one dollars was reserved for unexpected expenditures.

The 18% remaining in the home economics budget consisted of miscellaneous expenditures, such as supplies, conference travel, field trips and the consumer education fair.

Federal law requires that one-third of the consumer and homemaking dollars be spent in economically depressed areas. The documents Oakland submits to the State claim that 42% of the money in this category was spent in poor communities. But internal school system records reveal that some of the expenditures charged to the 42% of the budget go to schools throughout the city. For example, the $150 given to 35 teachers for equipment and $7,767 out of $8,891 for supplies in 18 schools are both counted into the amount supposedly spent in economically depressed areas.

Weaknesses in the federal law and California's negligence in supervising expenditure of VEA funds give local officials almost total freedom to spend money in any manner they choose. Although the VEA requires that priority in distributing federal funds be given to financially needy districts with high numbers of poor and unemployed persons and high-need students, the law does not require that money be spent on the most needy schools or students *within* districts. Even where the VEA requires that specific categories of funds be spent on extra costs or providing vocational education for handicapped and disadvantaged students, or in economically depressed, high unemployment or high school dropout areas, the California Department of Education makes no attempt to insure compliance with these mandates. Consequently, local authorities decide on their own priorities. In Oakland, it is the needs of the vocational teachers, not disadvantaged students, which determine the expenditure of funds.

During class, a game is in progress on the steps of Oakland High School.
Photos by Joffrè Clarke

Society's failure to provide meaningful opportunities for this generation of young people has long-range implications for America tomorrow. ➤

22

6 Sex Equity in Vocational Education: Who Cares?

Findings:

- *Federal requirements to reduce sex bias and stereotyping in vocational education are given little attention by Oakland school officials.*
- *Less than 1% of federal funds for vocational education is spent on promoting sex equity and equal access compared with 65.3% which is spent on sex stereotyped vocational classes.*

Vocational education has historically trained women only for traditionally female work which pays less than typically male jobs. It will take time and commitment to uproot the sex bias and stereotyping in training and employment which are deeply imbedded in our schools and labor market. The Vocational Education Amendments of 1976 required that state and local school officials promote sex equity so that all students will have full and equal access to programs which are non-traditional for their sex.

Economic reasons are the motivating factor for sex equity in vocational training. As the chart documents, traditionally male jobs pay better.

Young girls could improve their wage-earning potential by enrolling in those programs which could prepare them for male-dominated occupations.

A number of state and federal laws outlaw sex discrimination. What makes the VEA different is that it requires affirmative steps to undo sex stereotyping and bias in vocational education by recipients.

The California Five-Year State Plan for Vocational Education states that every school district receiving money under the State Plan shall

> *develop, implement and annually evaluate a plan for providing ready and equal access to occupational preparation. . . without regard to race, sex, ethnic background, national origin, or physical handicap.*

Vocational enrollments by sex

Vocational curriculum and classes in Oakland's comprehensive high schools are sex stereotyped, a condition common to school districts throughout America. A total of $207,111 of federal funds, or 65.3% of the total grant, supports these sex stereotyped classes.

WEEKLY ENTRY-LEVEL SALARIES IN THE SAN FRANCISCO-OAKLAND METROPOLITAN AREA, 1980

Male Intensive		Female Intensive	
Body & Fender Repair	$368	Typist	$201
Auto Apprentice	264	File Clerk	167
Carpenter Helper	167	Retail Clerk	161
Machinist	464	Child Care Attendant	124
Electronic Assembler	200	Bank Teller	203

FEMALE ENROLLMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL AREA: FALL 1979

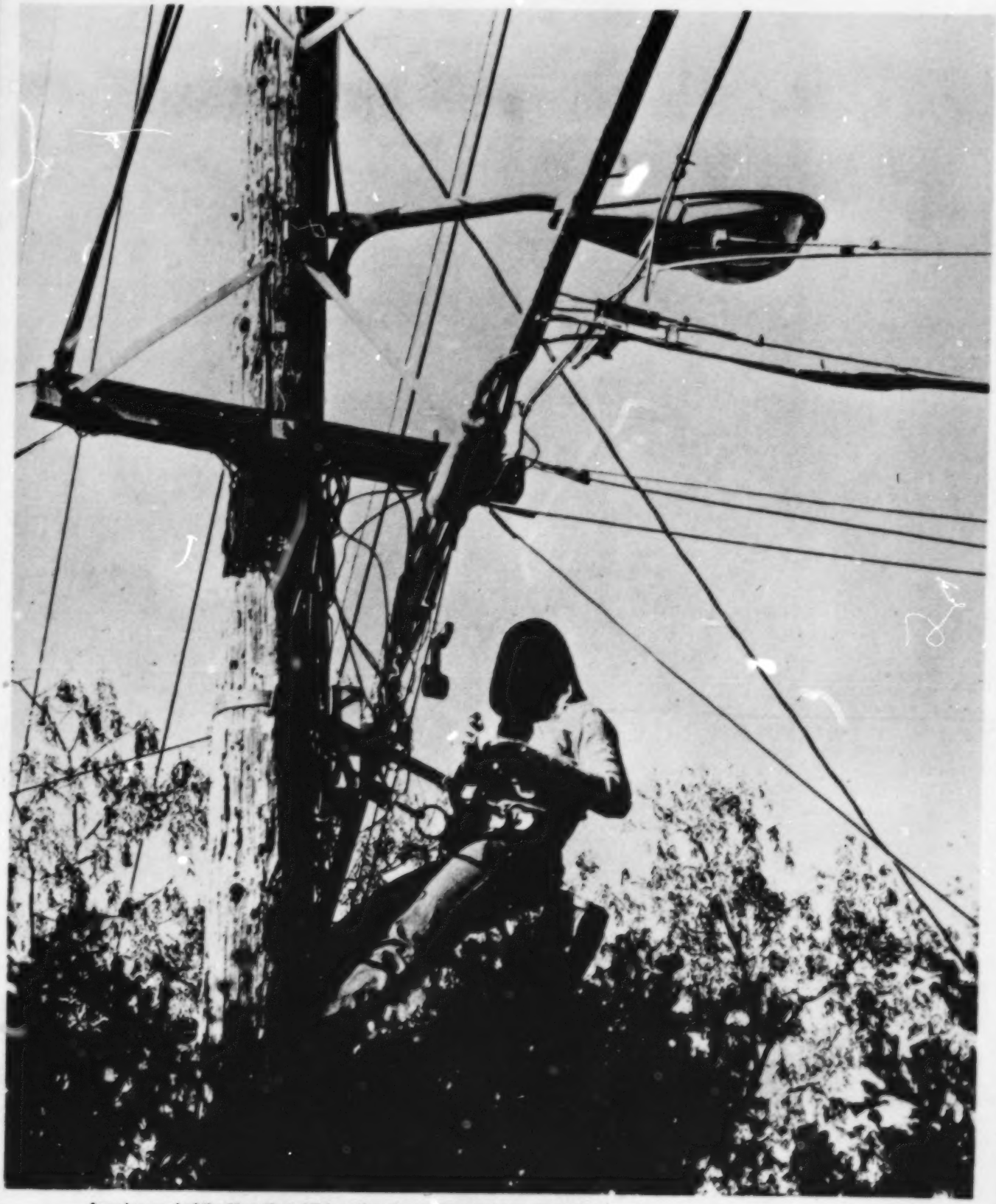
Occupational Area	All Girls	Black Girls	White Girls
Distributive Education	5.8%	6.4%	2.2%
Health	3.1	3.3	0.4
Home Economics	21.7	23.0	18.7
Office Occupations	53.1	51.7	57.9
Trades & Industry	16.4	15.7	20.9
	100.1%	100.1%	100.1%

MALE ENROLLMENT BY OCCUPATIONAL AREA: FALL 1979

Occupational Area	All Boys	Black Boys	White Boys
Distributive Education	3.9%	4.8%	0.3%
Health	0.6	0.9	1.0
Home Economics	8.4	12.3	1.5
Office Occupations	30.3	30.7	30.3
Trades & Industry	56.8	54.4	66.9
	100.0%	100.8%	100.0%

TOTAL AND FEMALE ENROLLMENT IN TRADES AND INDUSTRY

Program	Total Enrollment	Female Students
Auto Mechanics	261	13
Body & Fender Repair	32	0
Carpentry	274	20
Diesel	20	0
Drafting	331	31
Electrical	126	6
Electronics	23	1
Machine Shop	44	1
Welding	19	0
Plastics	12	1
Refrigeration	32	0



A major goal of the Vocational Education Amendments is to eliminate sex stereotyping so that women can prepare for higher-paying, traditionally male jobs.

Photo by Kathy Sloane

Photos this page courtesy Oakland Public Schools

Photo opposite page by Kathy Sloane

Boys and girls are almost evenly divided in the total 10th through 12th grade vocational enrollment—girls 49%, boys 51%, but they are concentrated in different occupational areas. As the chart reveals, over half of all girls are in Office Occupations and more than half of the boys are in Trades and Industry.

Some occupational areas, Home Economics and Office Occupations for example, reveal more equal participation by sex, but individual programs within the clusters are more heavily segregated. Home Economics is 40% male in the 11th and 12th grades, but boys are concentrated in Food Management at Fremont, Oakland Tech, McClymonds, Castlemont and Oakland High while girls are concentrated in Clothing at the same schools. In the traditionally female area of Office Occupations, young men are more than a third (37%) of the students, but they are taking Accounting, one of the largest programs. Skyline has a high enrollment of boys in Other Office Occupations, but this catch-all category includes Business Law, Business Math, Career English, and a class entitled Job Skills which are not traditionally sex stereotyped.

The most sex-segregated occupational area is Trades and Industry in which the traditionally male programs are clustered. Girls are a majority in only 2 programs—Graphic Arts and Cosmetology. In all other programs, they are either a distinct minority or totally absent.

Whose problem is sex bias?

Progress in achieving sex equity in vocational education is measured in large part by how school authorities define the problem. In California, each local district's application for VEA funds must identify deficiencies in providing equal access and describe measures that will be taken to overcome them. Oakland educators say the attitudes of parents, students and teachers are the chief problem.

Traditional attitudes about the "proper" occupational endeavors of men and women are an important deterrent to equal access, but they exist in the highest administrative ranks, not just in schools and families. One indication of the problem emerged during an interview of a high school principal. We asked what the school was doing to encourage girls to enroll in traditionally male programs and were told: "We haven't gotten around to that yet." To pursue the subject further, we wanted to know if the school's counselors had attended any workshops on sex equity in vocational education. The principal responded: "Yes. Some of our counselors attended a workshop on prenatal care last year."

If attitudes are the main problem, then the reason for so little action by the Oakland school system is that officials do not think sex equity important. OPS has taken steps to correct sex-based inequities in physical education and sex stereotyping in curriculum materials, but there has been no systematic effort to promote sex equity in the vocational program. Never implemented was a recommendation to establish model programs in each senior high and to institute intensive recruiting in order that one-third of the enrollment would be female.

Oakland was one of 38 California school systems which received a special grant of VEA funds to reduce sex bias and stereotyping in vocational education. This award of $4,000 generated Oakland's most visible effort—a pamphlet entitled "Of Course You Can." The publication consists of a series of pictures of people who work in non-traditional jobs—a woman carpenter, a male typist, and the female Superintendent of Schools. Each photograph is accompanied by a personal statement about the duties and rewards of the job.

The pamphlet's audience is students, and the message conveyed is that they will find non-traditional employment rewarding, if they would only make the effort. The school environment that students face each day does not convey the same message. School officials display little awareness of the sex equity provisions in the VEA. They think that the elimination of formal barriers to the enrollment of girls in industrial arts or of boys in home economics has resolved the issue. No incentives are employed to encourage students to enroll in classes non-traditional for their sex. No effort has been made to reorganize the curriculum so that it is no longer sex stereotyped. To the extent that a problem is even recognized, it is passed off on the attitudes of parents and students.

Oakland school authorities are not alone responsible for inaction on implementing the sex equity provisions of the VEA. The mandate is left to the states to enforce. The California Department of Education has never required local school systems to develop the equal access plans which were promised in the State Plan for Vocational Education, and local funding applications are approved every year regardless of what school systems have promised or accomplished. Once again, implementing the promise of the Vocational Education Amendments is left to local officials, and if they do not care, who does?

7 Recommendations

None of the problems discussed in this report is unique to Oakland. Every American community is challenged to combat teenage unemployment and to help young men and women make the transition between school and the world of work. The Oakland school system by itself cannot solve these problems. An effective partnership is required of educators, employers, parents and community leaders, if young people are to be equipped for the job opportunities of the 1980's.

Leadership from the Governor, the Legislature and State agencies is also required to assure a framework of laws, and their imaginative implementation and sufficient resources to enable the Oakland Public Schools to become more responsive to its youth. Many of the recommendations of the AB 576 Task Group Report to the California Legislature point the way to revamping vocational education throughout the State. Among these are recommendations to:

- *Develop a diversity of classroom and worksite training;*
- *Involve employers directly in the design, implementation and evaluation of vocational programs;*
- *Remove legal and financial obstacles to flexible program scheduling, staffing patterns, worksite training, and cross-enrollments between high schools, community colleges and other training programs;*
- *Assist students to enter the labor market by using accurate and current information about job opportunities in career counseling;*
- *Link basic skill instruction to occupational training for in-school and out-of-school youth.*

To the Oakland school system

Recognizing the need for linkage between schools and the world of work, the School Board should adopt policies to be implemented in actions and programs by the central office and the schools that will:

1. ***Communicate** the message that preparation for the world of work and for postsecondary education is equally valued.*
2. ***Translate** that message into curriculum offerings and the scheduling of classes so that students will take seriously the availability of opportunities for learning in both the academic and vocational areas.*
3. ***Provide** an adequate number of trained vocational counselors.*
4. ***Eliminate** sex bias and stereotyping in vocational education and actively recruit boys and girls for courses that are non-traditional for their sex.*
5. ***Target** funds to the disadvantaged.*
6. ***Reach out** to employers and seek new ways of involving them in joint efforts to improve the quality and relevance of the curriculum and to expose young people to workplaces.*
7. ***Explore** the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of centrally located vocational programs and of other innovative ways of offering a range of quality programs district-wide.*

To employers in the greater Oakland metropolitan area

Recognizing their vested interest in a skilled workforce, and also their responsibility to contribute to its development as a long-range investment, employers should expand existing models of school-corporate partnership and could:

1. ***Assign*** *their employees on a full-time or rotating basis to work as career counselors, job placement specialists, and instructional advisors in junior and senior high schools.*
2. ***Adopt*** *a vocational program, loan or donate equipment, provide cooperative vocational education to students, or make downtown space available for both classroom and worksite training.*
3. ***Establish*** *new Regional Occupational Programs to meet employers' needs. Pacific Telephone and Telegraph, for example, has established ROP's with the Richmond and San Ramon school districts to train long distance operators.*
4. ***Create*** *employee exchange programs with the Oakland Public Schools in which employers provide training for youth while instructors whose skills are outdated are retrained.*

To parents and community leaders

Oakland parents and community leaders can make a difference by translating their concern about unprepared and unemployed young people into informed action. They can:

1. ***Communicate*** *to the School Board and administrators that equal priority must be given to preparing young people for employment.*
2. ***Urge*** *the Legislature and State agencies to make more effective use of education and youth training funds by enforcing requirements for Regional Occupational Programs and targeting resources on students most in need.*
3. ***Investigate*** *vocational programs to determine their purpose, worksite training opportunities, and job placement record.*
4. ***Counsel*** *students that the pursuit of academic learning and the acquisition of occupational skills are mutually supportive goals and encourage young people in their efforts to make the most of the school years.*

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.
Division of Legal Information
and Community Service

Western Regional Office
12 Geary Street
San Francisco, CA 94108

National Office
10 Columbus Circle
Suite 2030
New York, NY 10019

Washington Office
806 15th St. N.W. #940
Washington, D.C. 20005

Oakland Employers Interviewed

Pacific Telephone and Telegraph
Employers Overload
Bay Area Rapid Press
Shaklee Corporation
Toys and Hobbies, Eastmont Mall
AMCO Transmissions
Emporium Capwell Department Store
Clorox Co.
Brown and Root
Kaiser Industries, Inc.

Photographs Courtesy Of:

Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp.
Alameda Naval Air Station
Safeway Stores Inc., Forms Control and Printing Department
City of Oakland, Personnel Department
Home Savings and Loan
Montgomery Ward and Company
Pacific Gas and Electric
Payless Drug Store, Rockridge Center
Sears Roebuck, Auto Repair